

Read: Jonah 3:1-10

God's Word Powerfully Worked in Nineveh

Jonah 3:8b-9

Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

When you get in trouble at school, do you

- A. Get mad at your teacher.
- B. Blame another person in the class.
- C. Say, "Yeah. I totally did that. I was so wrong. I'm so sorry. How can I make it up to you?"

Let's be honest, nobody really wants to admit that they were wrong—even if they were—so C rarely happens.

Except, it did once.

God told a man named Jonah to talk to people who lived in a city called Nineveh (pronounced *ninn-uh-vuh*). He said, "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me."

Oh, great. Basically Jonah had to tell everyone in the city that they misbehaved very badly. They went against God's laws and they were about to get in trouble. Well, not just trouble, but BIG trouble. For three days (it was a big city!), Jonah told them the bad news.

Instead of getting mad at Jonah and blaming their neighbors, the people said, "Yep. We totally did that. We were so wrong. We're so sorry. We want to make it up to God."

Another man—a king named David—lived about 250 years before Jonah. He knew that admitting when he did something wrong actually made him feel better, "When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. . . . Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.' And you forgave the guilt of my sin," (Psalm 32:3,5 NIV).

When David tried to hide his sins, the weight of his guilt made him sick to his stomach and he groaned all day. But when he admitted to God what he did, he heard the sweetest words from God, "I forgive you." That's the same thing that happened to the people who lived in Nineveh.

Here's the thing. God already knew David's sins and Nineveh's sins, the same way he knows yours. Confessing your sins is not something God needs you to do. It's something God wants for you. Pretending you aren't guilty isn't being honest. When you hide your sins, you hold on to them. When you admit them, you say, "I was wrong, God. I'm so sorry. But Jesus already paid for them, so I don't have to carry them around anymore. Thank you."

God has compassion on you, just like he did with the people of Nineveh.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- Remember the last time you got caught for doing something wrong?
- Were you sorry? Why is it important for someone to then say, "I forgive you"?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Talk about the last time someone did something wrong. Did you tell on them or talk to them about it?
- What sins of ours should we confess to God now?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Have you ever had to tell someone they were doing something wrong? How much courage did that take? How do you think Jonah felt having to talk to the people of Nineveh?
- Recall a time you got caught for doing something wrong. What reminder from today's devotion might help you admit and repent the next time you do something wrong?

Closing Prayer:

Dear God, help me to do what you tell me. If I don't follow your plans and path, please help me to admit when I'm wrong. Then, let me hear your sweetest words, "I forgive you." Amen.

Hymn: CW 397:1,5 – Just As I Am, without One Plea

Just as I am, without one plea
But that thy blood was shed for me
And that thou bidd'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.